

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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TAGS: ETEL TSPA, UR

SUBJECT: MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE SYSTEM.

REF: STATE 4533 AND 9752

IN MARITIME FIELD THE DISCUSSIONS HELD UNDER 1973 US-USSR TRANSPORT AGREEMENT DEAL WITH A BROAD RANGE OF SUBJECTS; AND EVEN IN THE NARROWER NAVIGATION AND COMMUNICATIONS FIELD THE SUBJECT OF MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITES OCCUPIES ONLY A SMALL PART OF THE CONVERSATIONS TO DATE. HOWEVER, AS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO EMBASSY, AND AS PROMISED REFTEL 4533, SOME RUSSIAN OBSERVATIONS ARE SUMMARIZED FOR EMBASSY'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION. SOVIET COMMENTS WERE MADE BY Y. S. ATSEROV, HEAD OF NAVIGATION AND MARITIME ADMINISTRATION, TO STANLEY WHEATLEY, DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF ADVANCED SHIP OPERATIONS IN MARITIME ADMINISTRATION (MARAD).

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ATSEROV'S OBSERVATION WHEN SUBJECT WAS FIRST RAISED

WAS TO TAKE U.S. TO TASK FOR WHAT HE CONSIDERED OUR UNFORTHCOMING AND UNCOOPERATIVE ATTITUDE IN THE LONDON POE TALKS PARTICULARLY AS THEY RELATED TO PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEALING WITH MARITIME SATELLITES.

IN A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION HE EXPRESSED RUSSIAN CONCERN REGARDING EMERGENCE OF COMSAT IN MARITIME FIELD. FYI THE COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE CORPORATION (COMSAT) IS U.S. SIGNATORY TO THE INTELSAT OPERATING AGREEMENT. ITS WHOLELY OWNED SUBSIDIARY, COMSAT GENERAL, IS THE MAJOR PARTICIPANT IN AN AMERICAN CONSORTIUM WHICH WILL LAUNCH TWO MARITIME SATELLITES THIS YEAR TO BE USED BY THE U.S. NAVY BUT WHICH WILL ALSO HAVE EXCESS CAPACITY THAT WILL BE SOLD TO COMMERCIAL SHIPPING. END FYI ATSEROV'S FEAR APPARENTLY IS THAT COMSAT WITH A HEAD START WILL DOMINATE GLOBAL MARITIME SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS AND THEREBY LIMIT OR RESTRICT WHAT OTHER NATIONS MIGHT BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH IN THE FIELD.

THE MARAD REPRESENTATIVE CITED SOME ADVANCES U.S. AND COMSAT HAD MADE IN SYSTEM EXPERIMENTATION, EXPERIENCE THAT COULD POSSIBLY INCREASE COST EFFECTIVENESS IN SOME AREAS OF TECHNICAL STANDARDS. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT COMSAT AS A PRIVATE COMPANY WAS HIGHLY RESPONSIVE TO CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS WHATEVER THE CUSTOMERS' NATIONALITY. THESE ARGUMENTS APPEARED TO CARRY SOME CONVICTION WITH ATSEROV AND AT LEAST FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CONVERATION HIS ATTITUDE APPEARED TO SOFTEN.

FYI CERTAINLY THE RUSSIANS HAVE SERIOUS DISAGREEMENT WITH U.S. POSITION THAT IN ANY MARITIME SATELLITE AGREEMENT THE OPERATING AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON BEHALF OF THE U.S. WOULD BE ASSUMED BY A DESIGNATED COMMERCIAL ENTITY, IN A GENERAL SENSE SIMILAR TO COMSAT'S ROLE IN THE INTELSAT AGREEMENT. THE CHOICE OF SUCH AN ENTITY, ITS COMPOSITION, OPERATING AUTHORITY, ETC. WOULD BE AN OUTGROWTH OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXTENSIVE HEARINGS BEFORE U.S. REGULATORY BODIES, CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY, ETC. END FYI KISSINGER

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